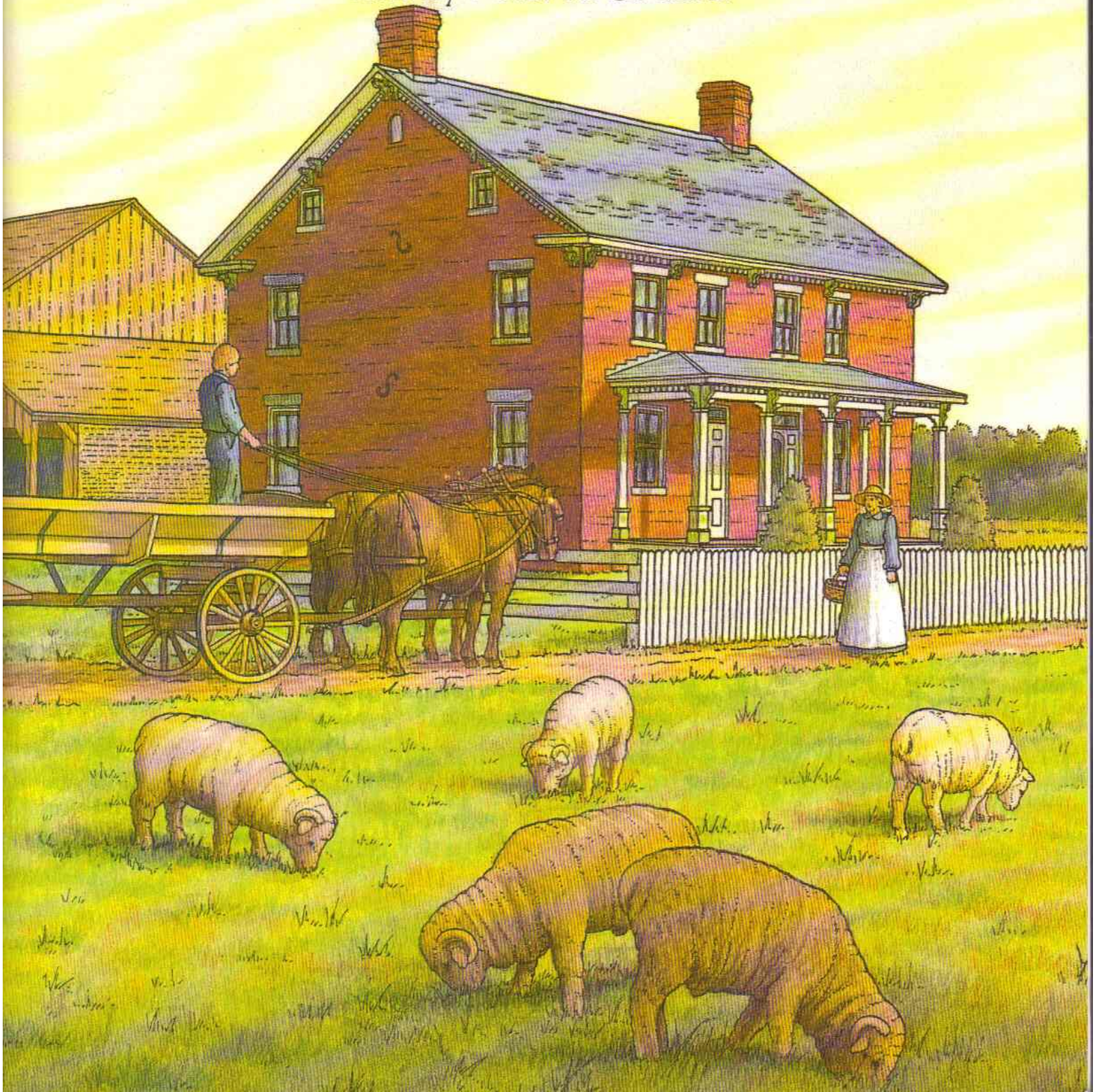
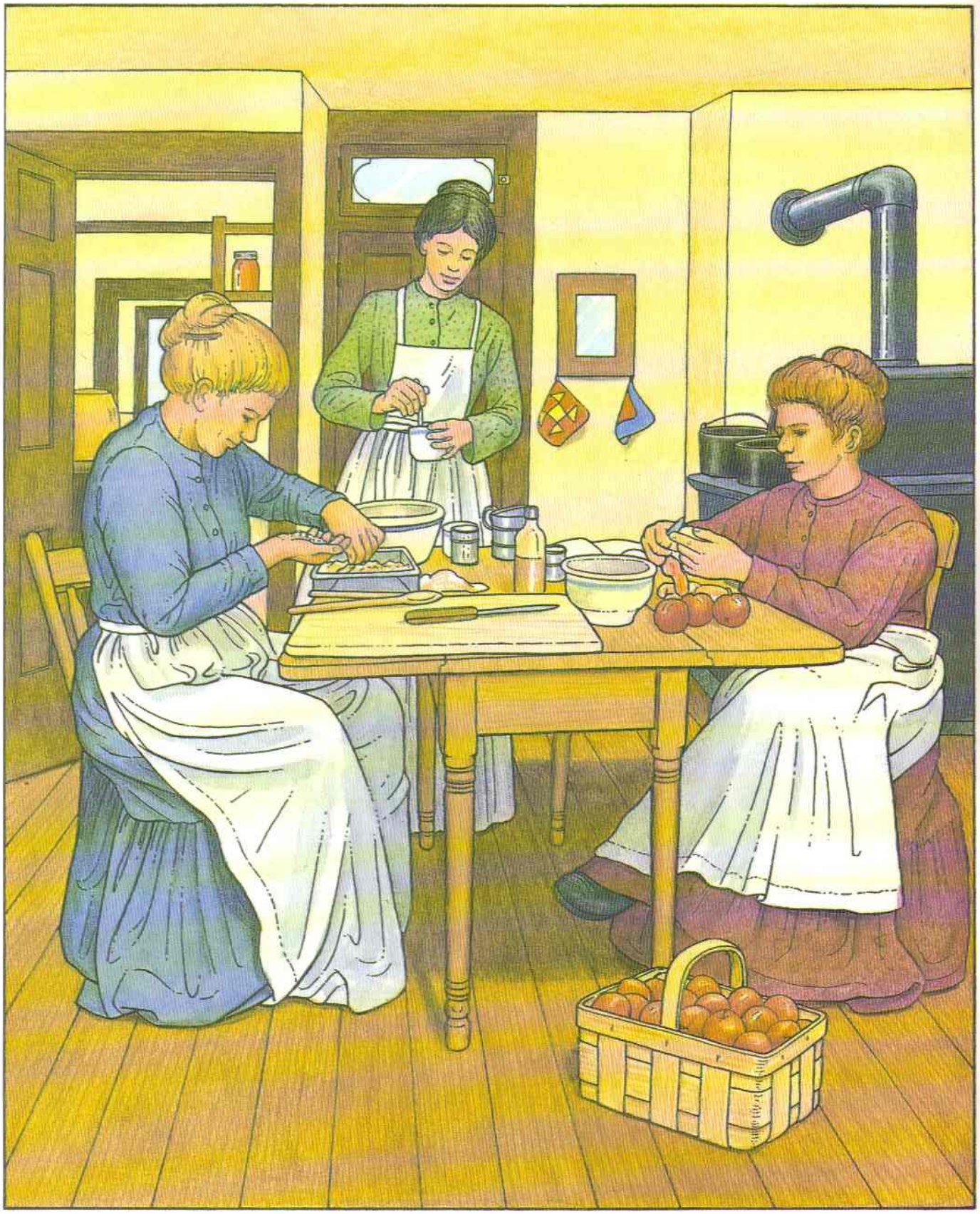
Dover Coloring Book

OLD-FASHIONED FARM LIFE Coloring Book

Nineteenth-Century Activities on the Firestone Farm at Greenfield Village

Illustrations by A.G. Smith
Text by Peter H. Cousins





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Nineteenth-Century Activities on the Firestone Farm at Greenfield Village

Illustrations by
A. G. SMITH

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Published in association with

HENRY FORD MUSEUM & GREENFIELD VILLAGE

HENRY FORD MUSEUM & GREENFIELD VILLAGE
Dearborn, Michigan

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Introduction

THIS BOOK PORTRAYS how farm families lived and worked a hundred years ago, during the 1880s, about halfway between the era of the American Revolution and our own day. Many of its illustrations are based on the historical reconstruction of a particular farm: the 1880s Columbiana County, Ohio farm worked by Benjamin and Catherine Firestone and their three sons. Its restored buildings have been moved to Dearborn, Michigan where they form the core of a living, working historical farm at Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village. While very different from the way American farm families live today, farm life as experienced by Benjamin and Catherine Firestone was equally unlike that of their great-grandparents who farmed in Pennsylvania during the 1780s.

Two hundred years ago, the new United States of America had a population of less than four million people. More than 90 out of every 100 of those people lived and worked on farms. Today, with a national population of more than 245 million people, more than 97 out of every 100 Americans live and work in towns and cities. The story of how a constantly decreasing proportion of farmers have been able to provide food and fiber for an ever increasing non-farm population is one of the great "success stories" of American economic history.

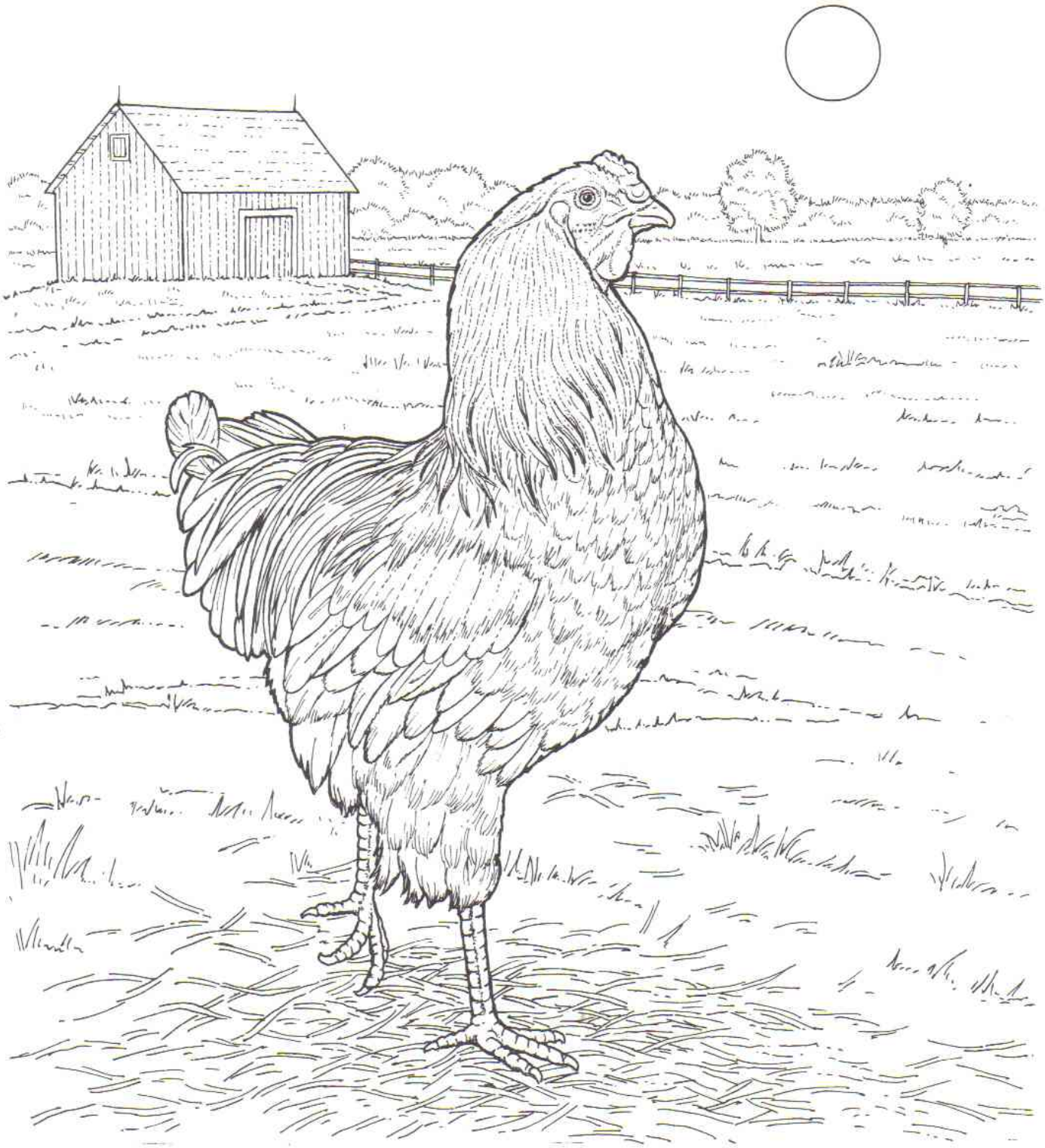
In large part, the success American farmers have had in producing larger and larger crops was due to a series of technological changes that either decreased the amount of labor necessary to operate a farm or increased the productivity of crop plants, farm animals, and farm land. While many of these changes occurred during the last sixty years, many others happened during the middle part of the nineteenth century.

What was life like on the Firestone farm one hundred years ago? And, how did it differ from life on a modern American farm? Farm families today operate complex businesses in which their entire livelihoods depend on the specialized production of one or two crops—corn and soybeans, winter wheat, spring wheat, beef, milk, market produce, etc. In order to produce these crops, farmers must purchase just about everything that is necessary: from seed, livestock feed, farm machinery, fertilizer, chemical pesticides and herbicides, fuel for their tractors and other equipment, to food for themselves and their families.

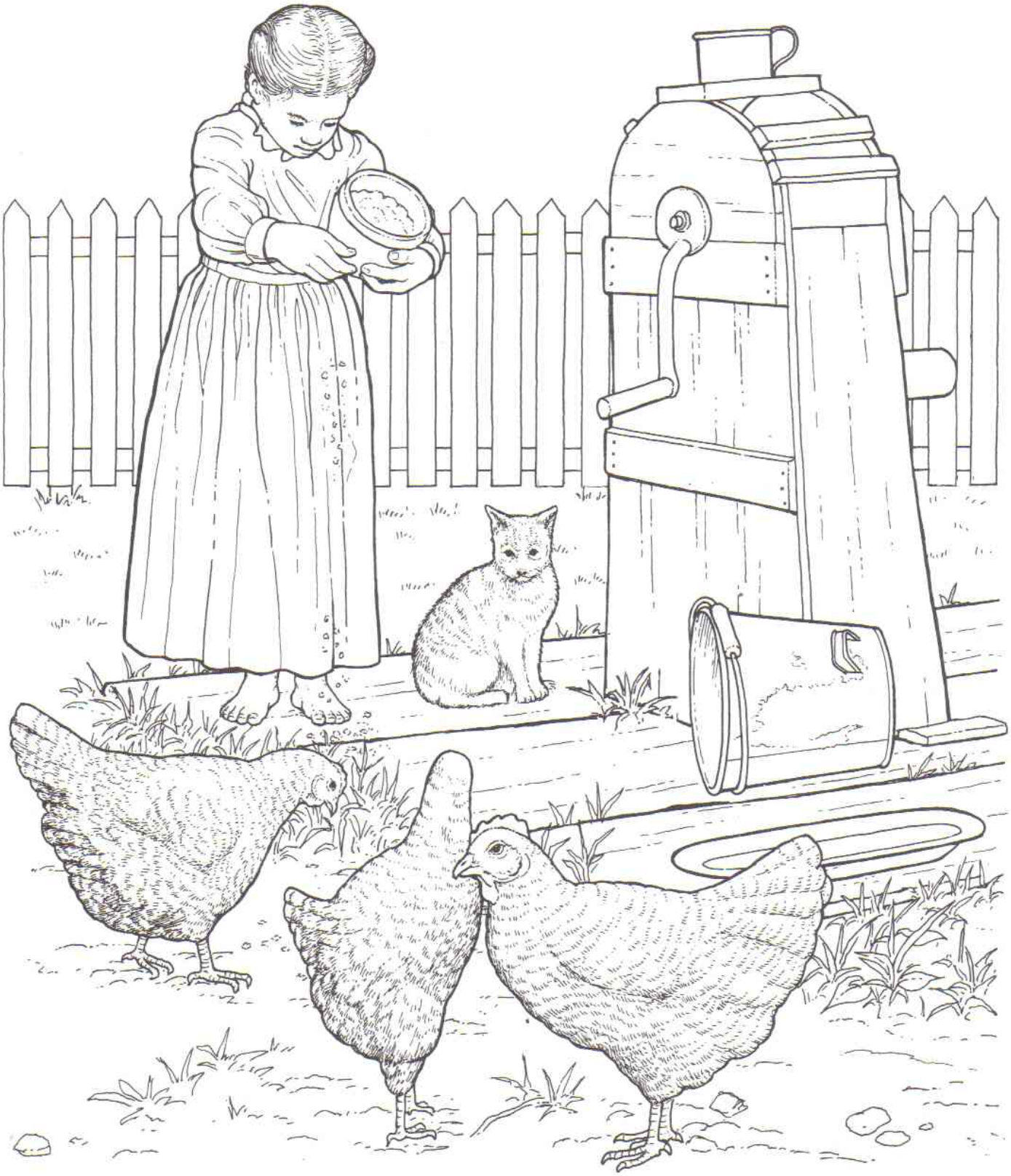
In the 1880s, Benjamin and Catherine Firestone operated a farm with considerably different objectives in mind. Their farm was a commercial enterprise but it was a diversified operation producing several crops so as to minimize the risk of being overly dependent on one source of income. Further suggesting the differences in thinking between the modern money-making farm businessman and farmers of one hundred years ago, even those products the Firestones raised exclusively for sale, such as wool or wheat,

were referred to as "surpluses," not as "cash crops." Even as commercial wool growers, the Firestones sought to be as self-sufficient as possible by producing on the farm nearly everything required for its operation. Thus, oats and hay grown on the farm and fed to the draft horses were the "fuel" to power the farm equipment; manure from the horses, cattle, and sheep was home-produced fertilizer for the farm's crops; and seed from one year's harvest was saved to be planted the next year. And, with the exception of a few imported foodstuffs such as coffee, tea, sugar, and salt, virtually all of the Firestone family's food was raised on their farm.

As you color the illustrations in this book consider the differences between rural life of the 1880s and today. Note those many activities that employed simple hand tools and would have been "old-fashioned" even one hundred years ago. Compare them to such signs of change at Firestone Farm as are represented by mechanized grain planting, reaping, and threshing equipment. Then imagine all the changes that were to come in the twentieth century as American farmers replaced their draft horses with tractors, became increasingly dependent upon various kinds of agricultural chemicals, and acquired electric power to light their homes, pump their water, milk their cows, and do hundreds of other jobs previously done by hand. This book captures American farm life at a turning point, beginning to experience the changes that would lead inevitably to the technologically advanced agriculture of our time, but still holding to many of the age-old traditions of farming life.



As sure as the sun rises in the morning, the rooster will be heard greeting it. This one is of the Dark Brahma breed, a variety originally from Asia. Brahma chickens were very popular among nineteenth-century Ohio farmers because they were meaty birds that could survive cold winters.

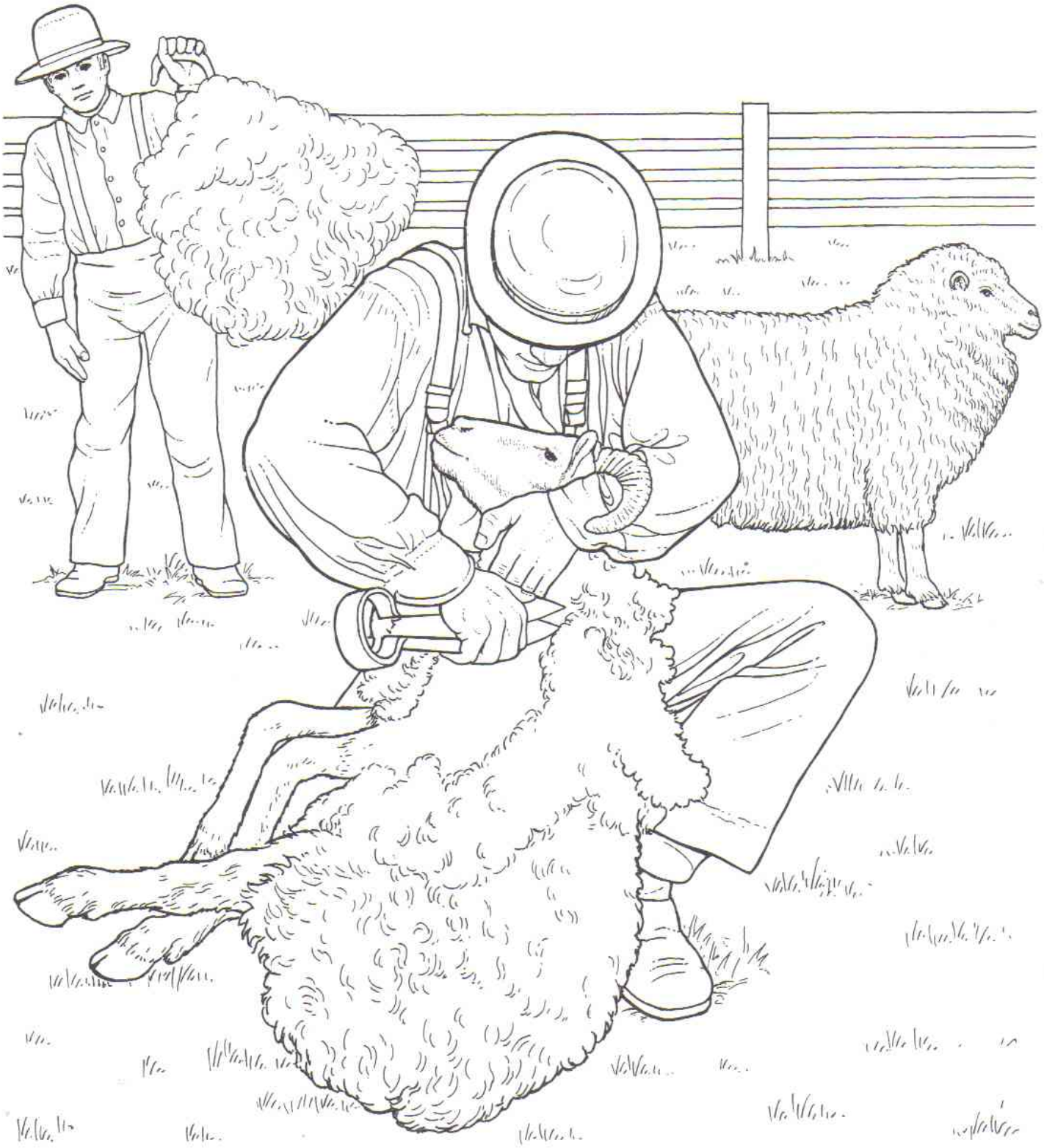


Farm wives' and daughters' chores include feeding the chickens. In 1880 Catherine Firestone cared for 75 chickens, which produced some 200 dozen eggs per year. She earned "pin money" by selling the eggs not consumed by the family for cash or credit at a general store in town.

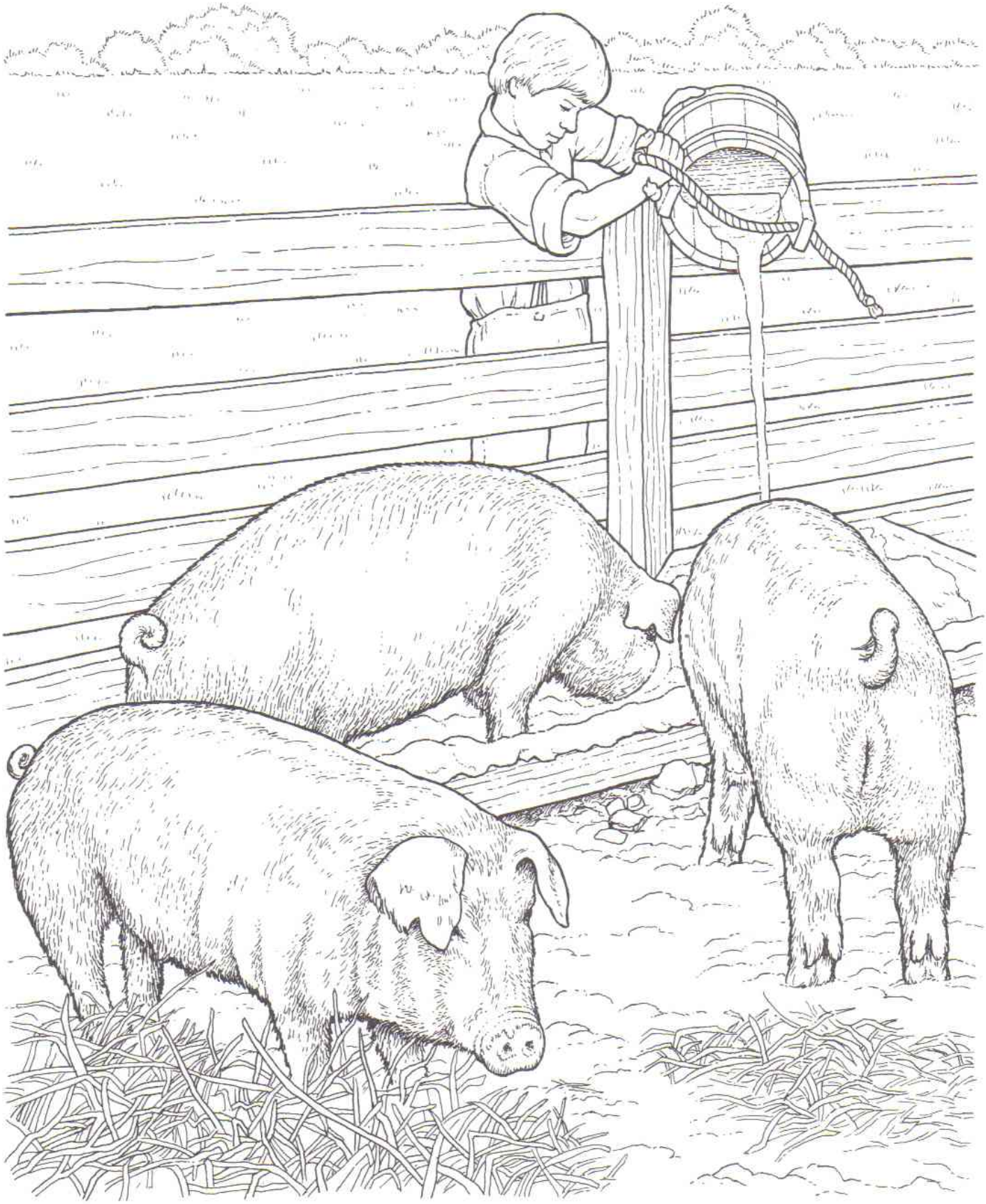
The big coal-burning cast-iron stove is the centerpiece of the Firestone farmhouse kitchen. It represented an enormous improvement in efficiency over the large open fireplace in which earlier generations of the Firestone family prepared their meals.

In early spring before the pasture grass has developed, ewes and their young lambs receive a welcome meal of hay and grain. Thirty-two spring lambs were born and nearly 40 acres of Firestone Farm's land was in pasture in 1880, providing summer sustenance for the sheep and other animals on the farm.

One of the hardest workers at Firestone Farm is the Border Collie that herds the sheep. Border Collies are a breed of working dogs that originated in the Scottish Lowlands and northern England. Their well-deserved fame as herding dogs led to their importation into North America during the late nineteenth century.

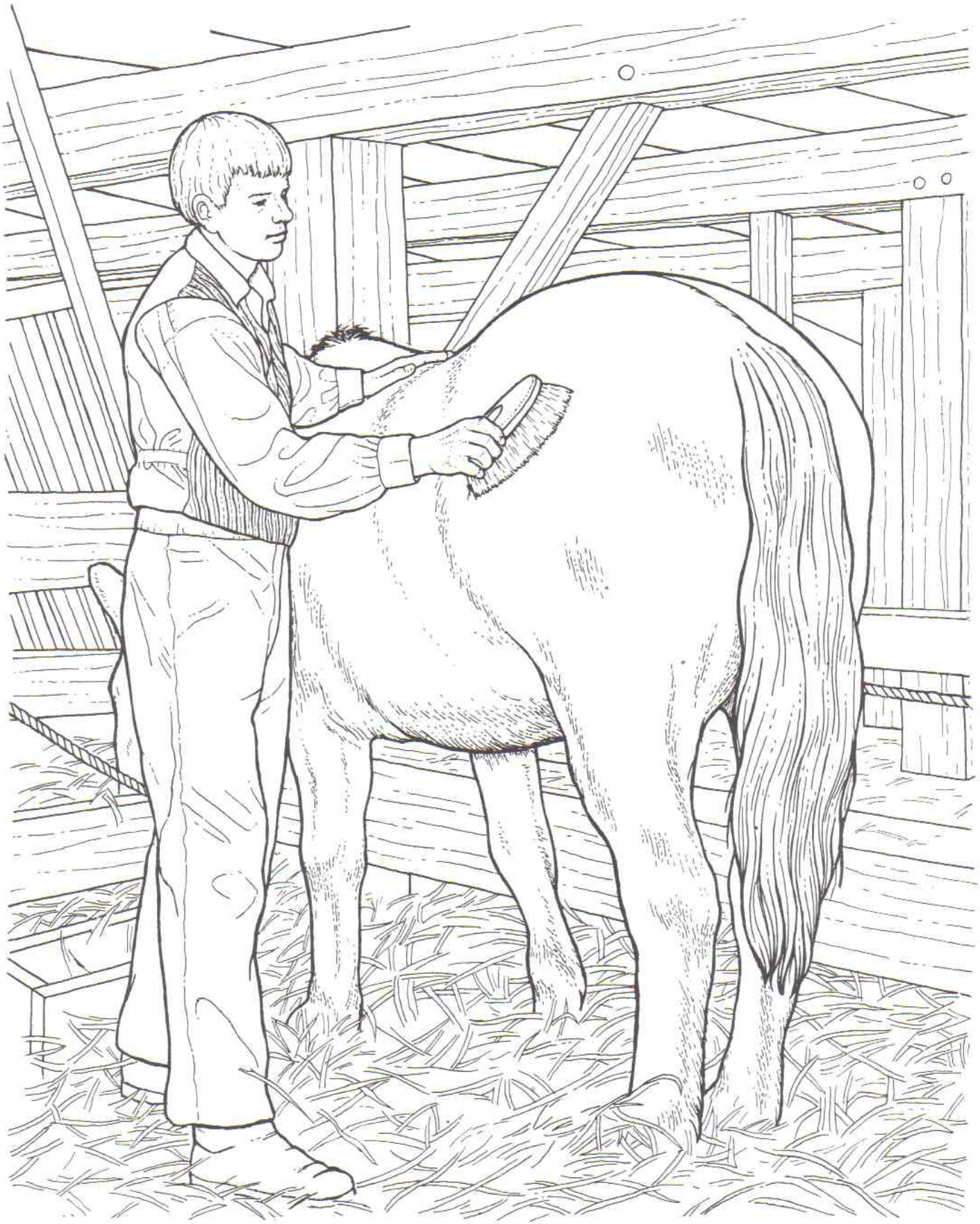


At Firestone Farm, spring is also harvest time since wool is the farm's most important product. In the spring of 1880 the 98 sheep sheared at Firestone Farm produced 392 pounds of wool, earning the family $215. Other sheep sold from the farm produced an income of about $320.

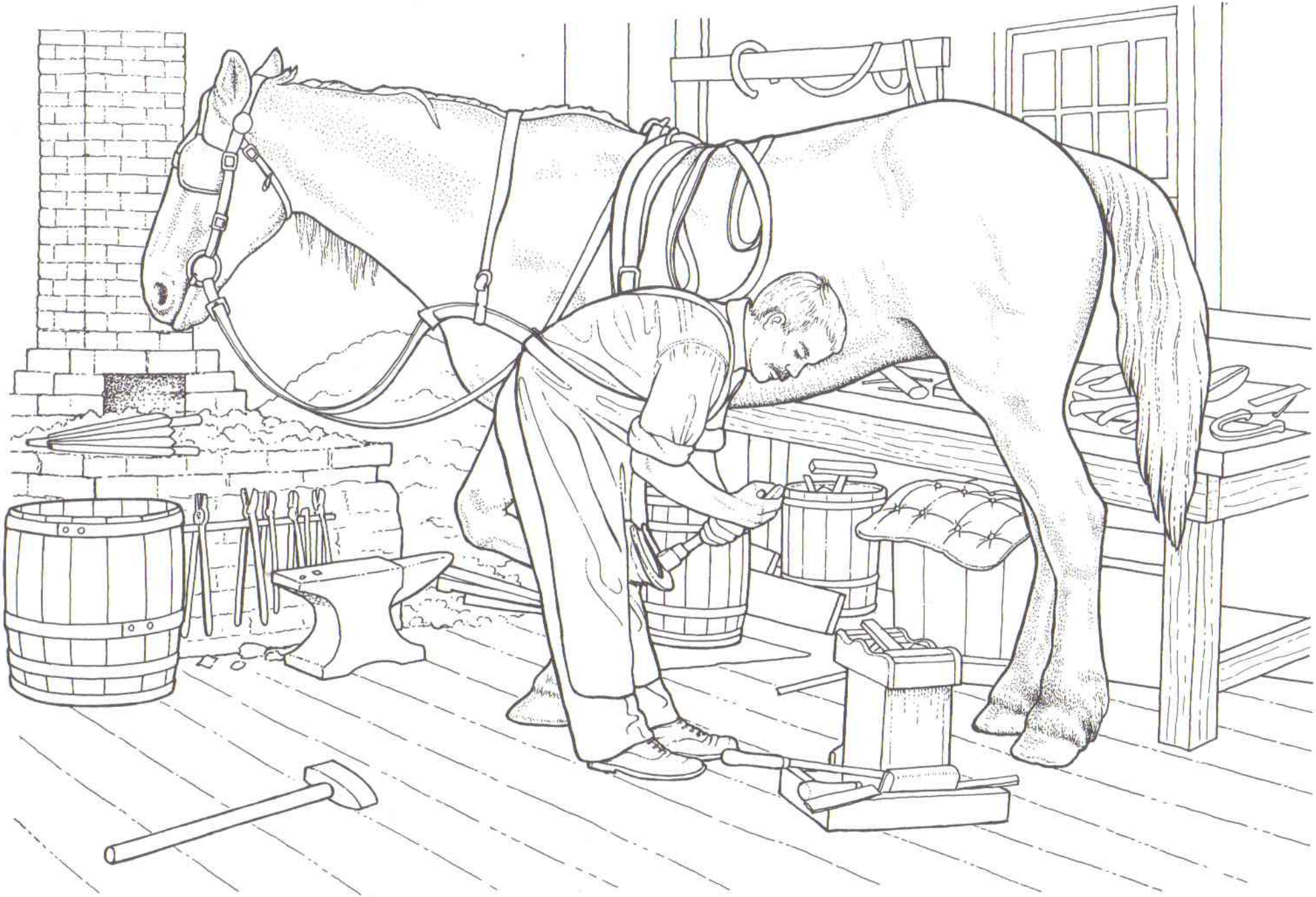


A farm boy's chores include feeding the hungry pigs. The most popular breed of swine in Columbiana County, Ohio during the 1880s was the black-and-white Poland China that, despite its name, originated in southwestern Ohio during the mid-nineteenth century.

Meat from the hogs butchered in the winter will be smoked or salted and pickled to feed the family next year. In 1880 the Firestones kept a sow and a boar as breeding stock and fattened the pigs that they produced for marketing or home consumption.



Grooming the horses is a daily task on the farm. Draft horses were the tractors of nineteenth-century American agriculture. In 1880 the Percheron, a breed of large horses that originated in Normandy, France, was favored by Ohio farmers.

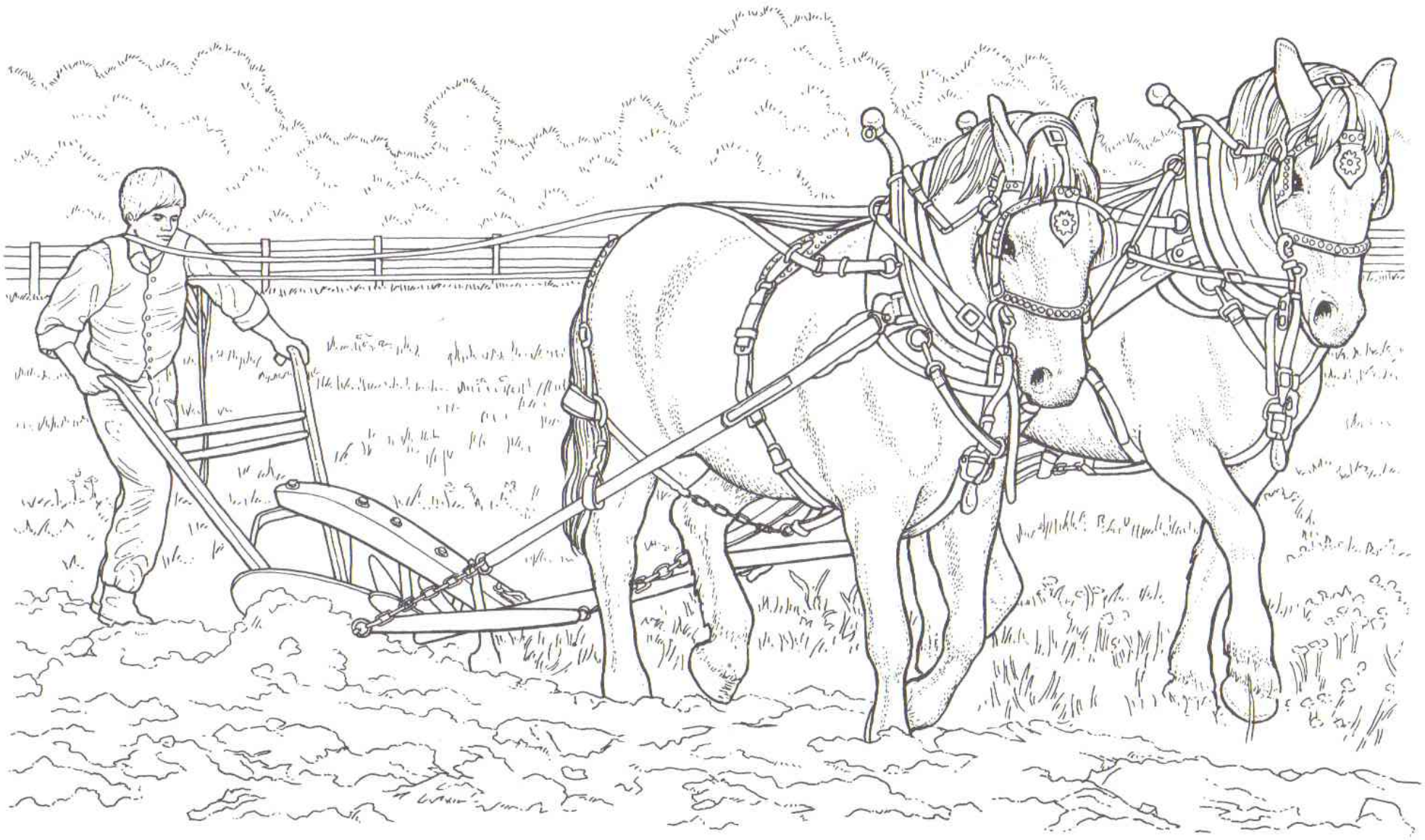


One of the farm horses gets fitted for a new set of shoes. The farrier, a professional shoer of horses, was a skilled craftsman who went from farm to farm and served as a veterinarian as well. After 1880 veterinary medicine became a specialized profession while horseshoeing remained a craft.

A pail of water provides a refreshing drink for young calves on a warm afternoon. Four calves were born at Firestone Farm in the spring of 1880. Bull calves were raised as steers to provide meat for the family and for market. Heifer calves grew to become part of the farm's small milking herd.

Every morning and every evening the farm's cows have to be milked. The Firestone Farm was not a specialized dairying operation. Only four producing milk cows were kept there in 1880. They were probably Shorthorn cattle, a dual-purpose (milk and beef) breed that originated in Durham, England.

Cream, separated from the cows' milk, is churned into butter. Skim milk, the by-product of cream separation, was fed to the pigs. Catherine Firestone packed 204 pounds of butter into crocks in 1880. Some was stored in the cellar for home use but much of the butter she sold, as with the eggs, to a local store.



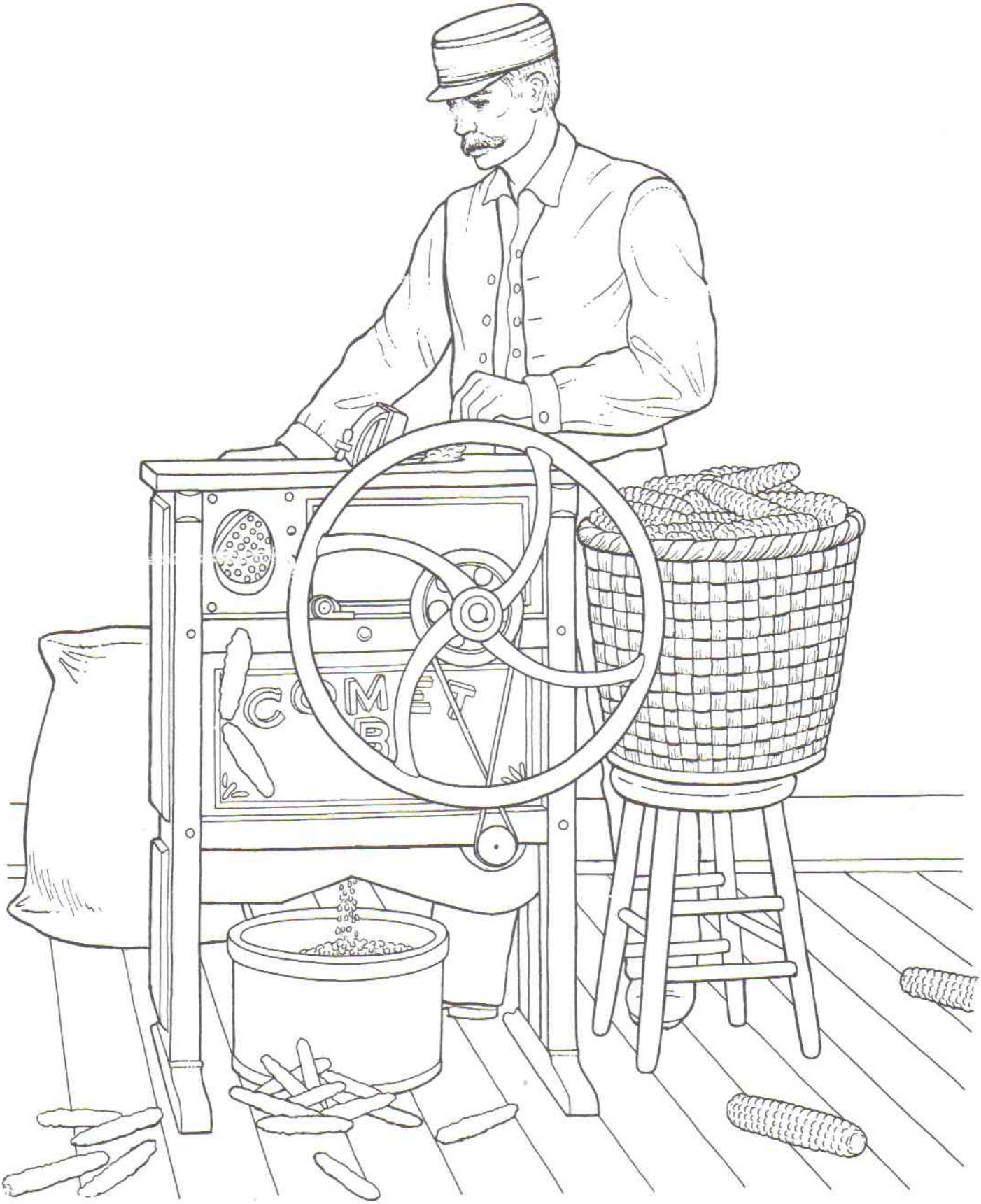
As soon as the soil is not too wet, spring plowing begins. Preparing the soil by breaking and pulverizing it with the plow is the farmer's first step in raising a crop. The objective of plowing is to create a deep seed and root bed of a good texture so that air and moisture can nurture the growing plants.

Corn is planted at Firestone Farm in the late spring with "walking stick" hand corn planters. In May, newly plowed fields were laid out with a row marker, a horse-drawn device that cut tracks into the soil at three-foot intervals. The result was a checkerboard of intersecting lines. Where the lines intersected, a hand planter was jabbed into the soil, depositing four or five kernels of seed.

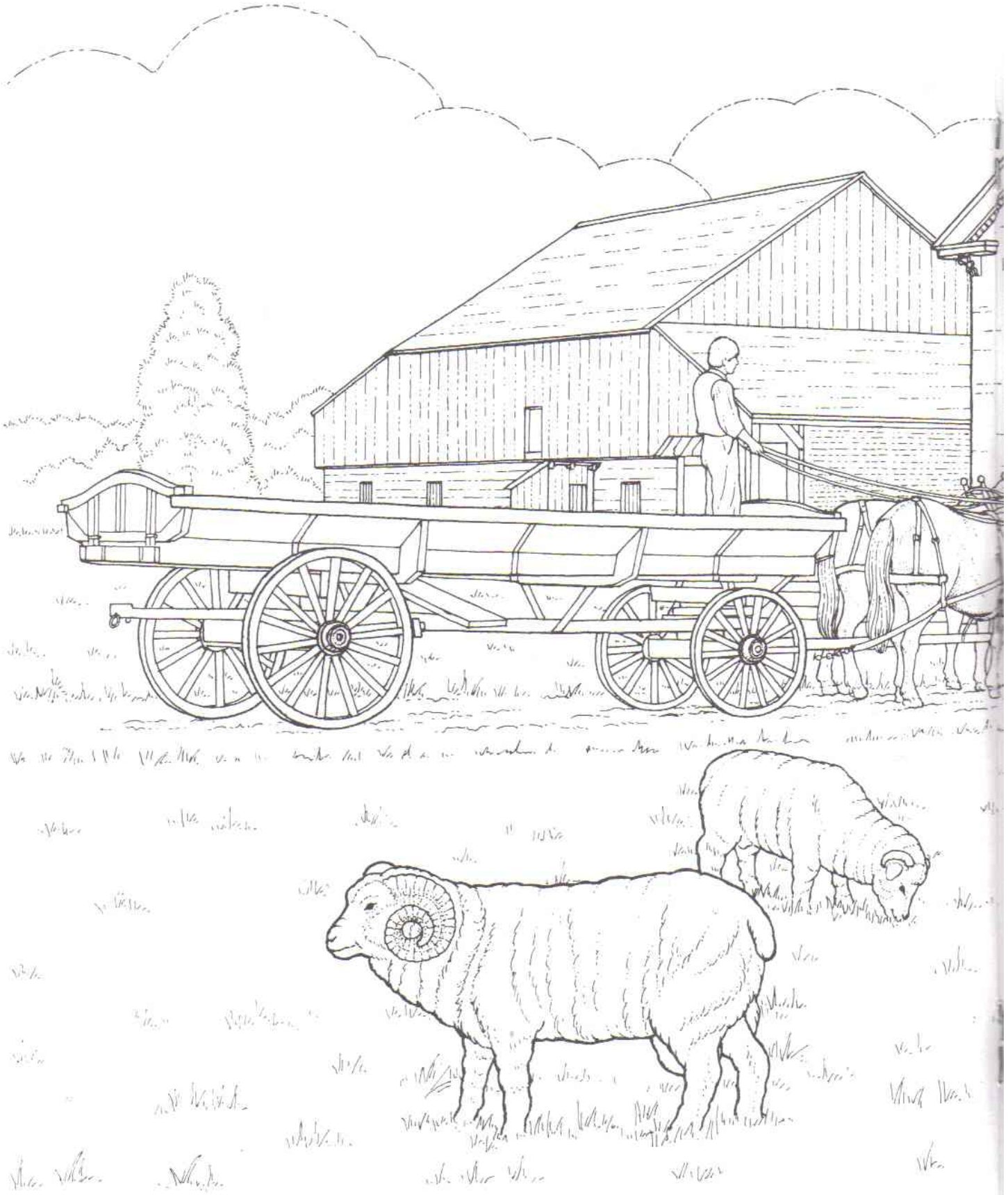
An important job in the early summer was cultivating the soil between the rows of young corn plants. This process killed weeds and kept the soil loose so that rainwater and nutrients could reach the plants' roots. Benjamin Firestone and his sons cultivated their eight acres of corn three or four times until the plants were large enough to be left alone.

In the fall, corn is cut by hand and stacked in protective shocks where the ears could dry. Later the ears would be husked and hauled to the corncrib for storage. Finally, the stalks would be gathered up and taken to the barn where they would be chopped and fed to livestock during the winter months.

The nicest ears of corn saved from the previous year's crop are carefully hand-shelled for seed to be planted in the spring. Selecting the largest ears for seed corn paid off for Benjamin Firestone. His 1880 harvest yielded 600 bushels or over 71 bushels per acre. That was a very good crop in the days before the development of modern high-yielding hybrid varieties of corn.

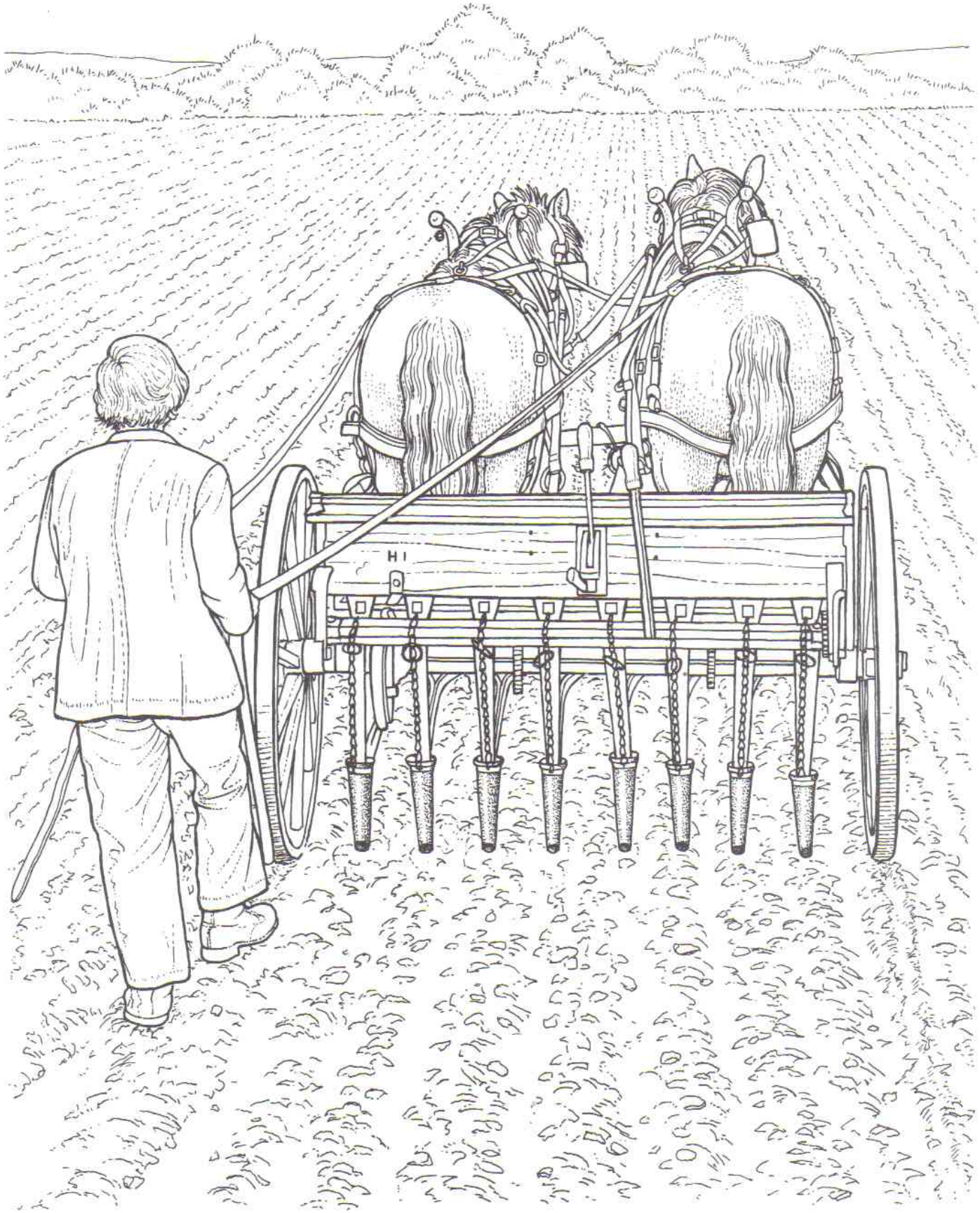


Corn to be fed to the farm's livestock is mechanically shelled with a corn sheller. Most farmers in the nineteenth century raised corn not for market, but as feed for their own livestock. Mechanical corn shellers, which became widely available after 1840, were a tremendous improvement over shelling corn by hand.



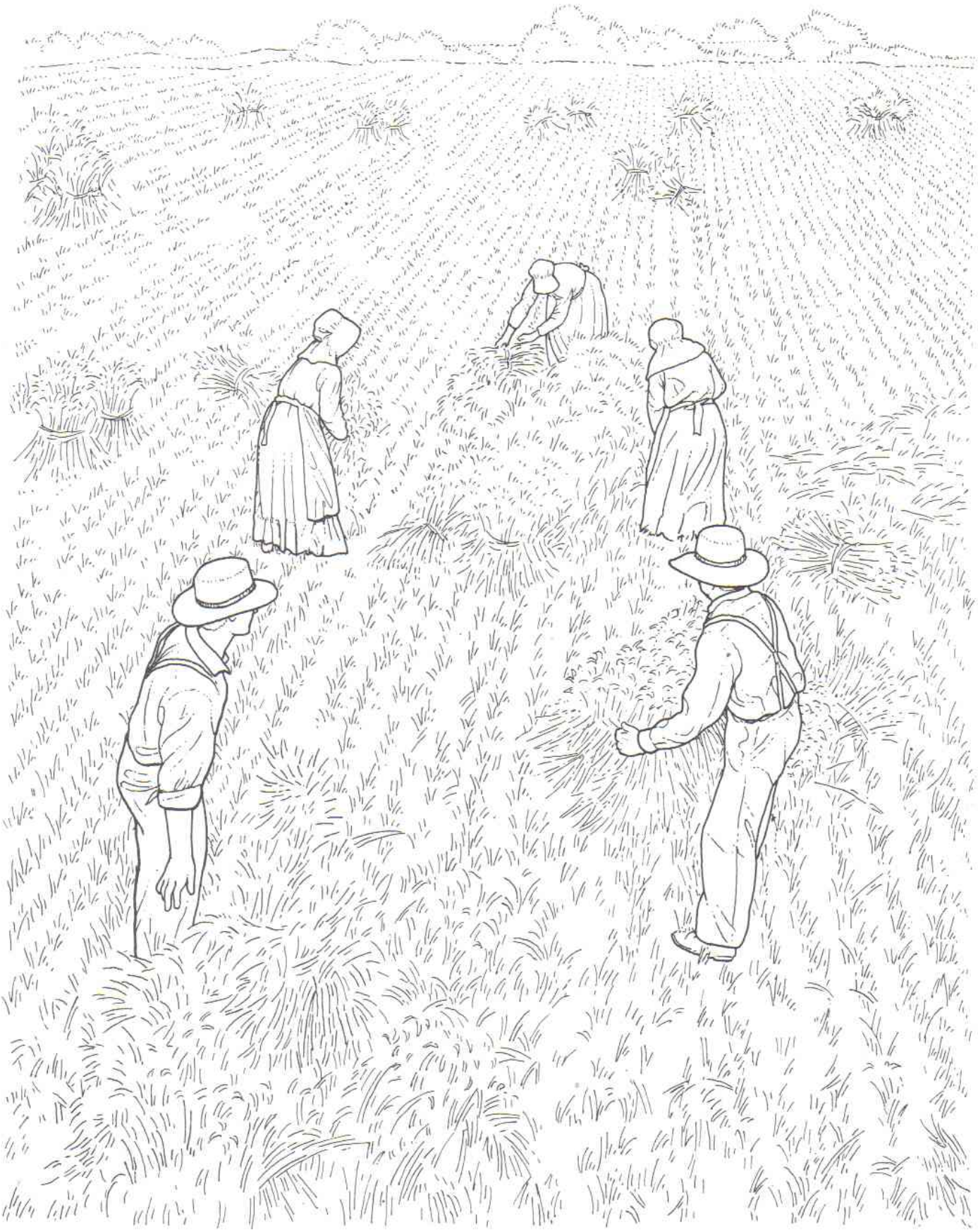
The Firestone farmhouse, barn, and privy were moved to Greenfield Village from Columbiana, Ohio. The house, originally built in 1828, was extensively modernized in 1882. The architectural styles of both the house and the barn are traditional Pennsylvania German designs.

This fact should not be surprising since Benjamin Firestone's grandparents were Pennsylvania Germans who settled on the Ohio frontier in 1801.



At Firestone Farm the grain drill is used at two times of the year: in the fall to plant winter wheat and in the early spring to plant oats. In 1880 the two grains occupied about 18 acres of the Firestones' land. The grain drill is a horse-drawn machine that plants and covers a measured amount of seed in closely spaced rows or "drills."

A horse-drawn reaper harvests the farm's wheat and oat crops. The mechanical reaper, adopted by farmers during the mid-nineteenth century, was the most important technological improvement of the era. By harnessing the muscle power of horses, the reaper replaced many human harvesters who had previously cut the crop by hand, thus allowing farmers to produce far larger grain crops.



Grain cut by the reaper was first bound into sheaves. The sheaves were then stacked in shocks to protect the grain from rain damage. Harvest was the busiest time of the year and everyone in the family worked long hours.

As soon as time permitted the shocks were dismantled and the sheaves of grain were hauled from the field for safe storage in the barn. Only then was the frantic pace of the harvest relaxed.

Threshing wheat and oats with a horse-powered threshing machine required help from neighboring farmers. Most farmers did not personally own expensive threshing equipment. Rather, they contracted with a custom thresherman who supplied the equipment. The farmer had to provide horses, labor, and hearty thresherman's dinners for everyone involved.

A combined bake oven and smokehouse provided the farm family with bread and bacon. Before the advent of cast-iron cookstoves, baking had to be done in ovens built for that purpose.

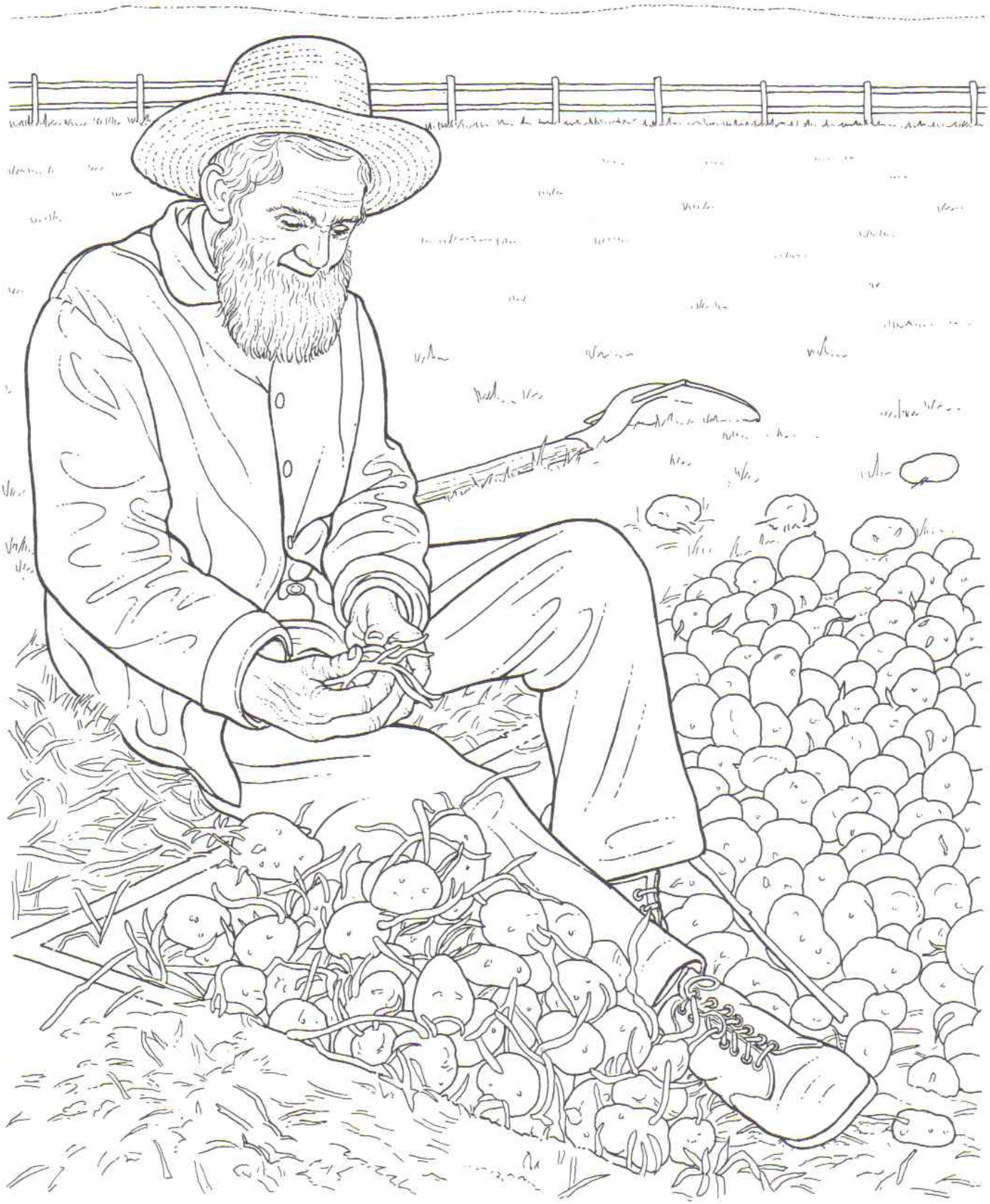
Spring means preparing the kitchen garden at Firestone Farm. Nineteenth-century farm families often sought to be as self-sufficient as possible. With the exception of such imported foodstuffs as sugar, coffee, and tea, everything the family ate was raised on the farm.

Herbs picked from the Firestone Farm kitchen garden will be dried for use during the coming year. Preserving perishable food for later use by drying, pickling, canning, and smoking occupied much of the farm wife's time.

Raspberries are picked in the late summer. Wild berries supplemented the fruit raised on the farm. After treating the family to fresh berries, the farm wife will be busy preserving the rest by making jelly, jam, or preserves.

Pies are made with apples from the Firestone Farm orchard. Fresh apples were used as long as the fruit could be kept in the cellar. Later in the year pies were made with dried apples.

Cabbage from Firestone Farm's kitchen garden is preserved as sauerkraut. After shredding, the cabbage is tightly packed into a stoneware crock where it is pickled in vinegar.

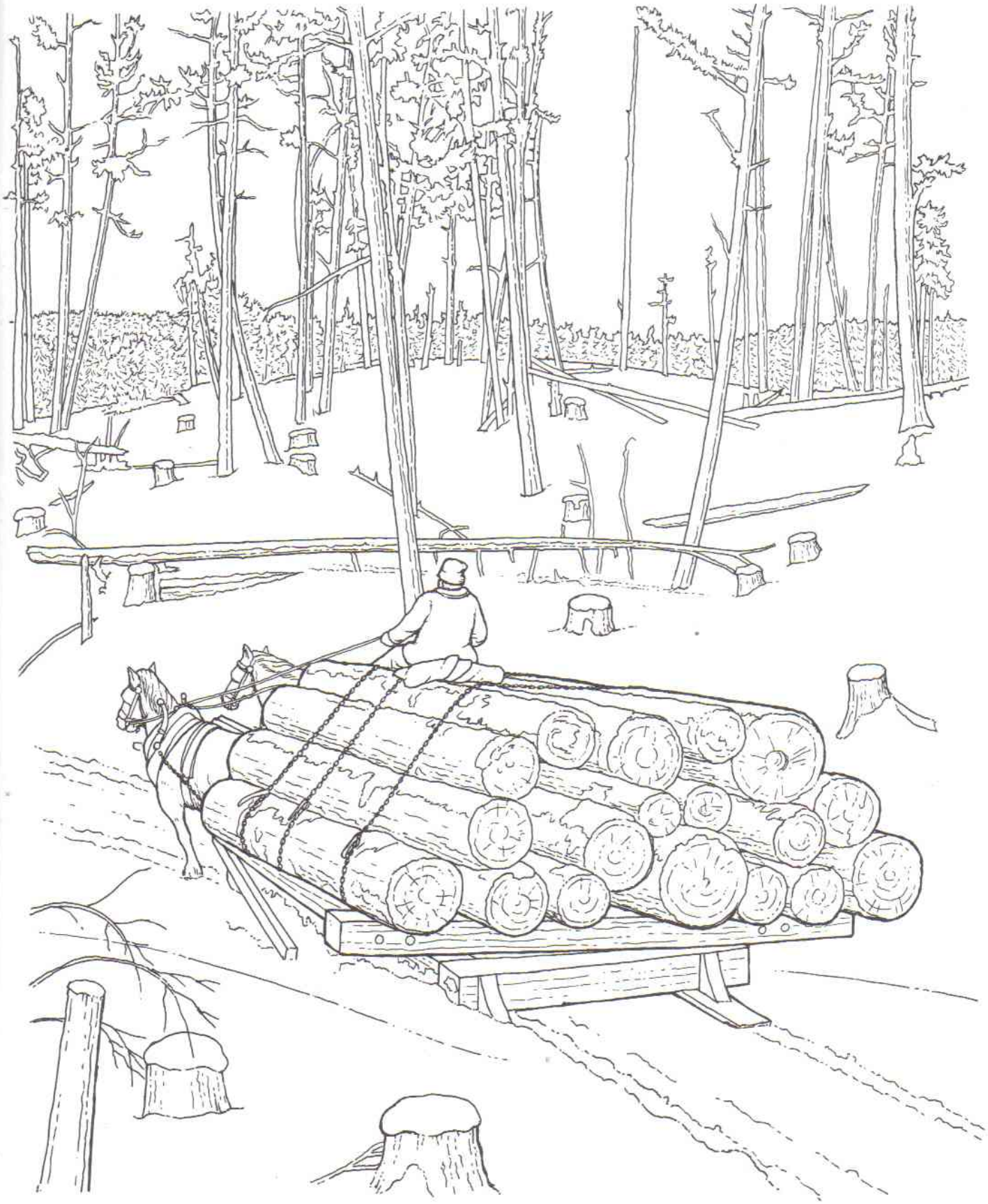


Seed potatoes kept in a cellar over winter have their sprouts removed before spring planting. The Firestones raised 60 bushels of potatoes for home use in 1880.

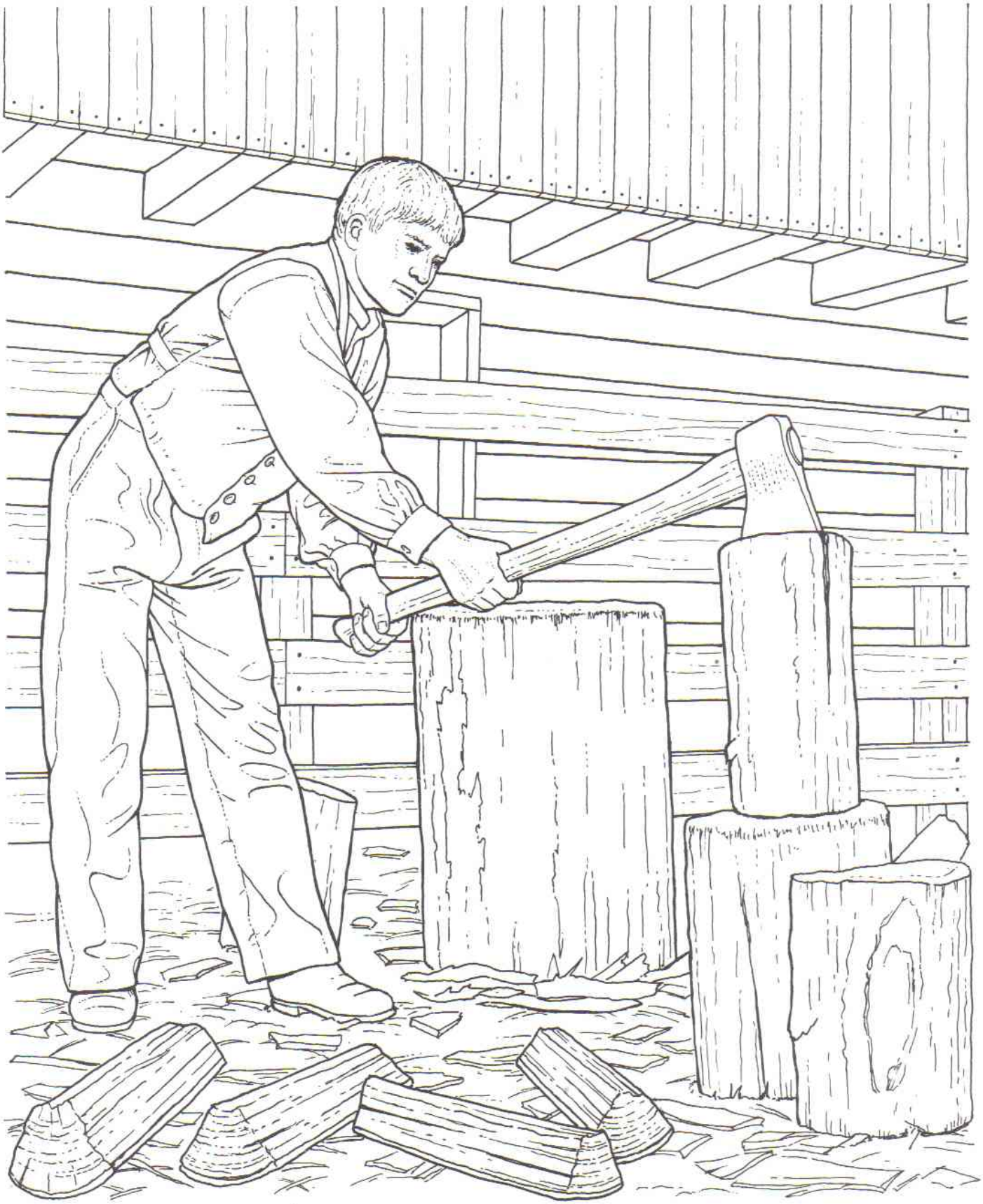
Pumpkins are gathered in the fall. The Firestones marketed some of their pumpkins in town. The meat from the pumpkins kept for home use was made into pies and was also preserved by canning.

In the orchard apples are picked and packed into barrels for shipment to market. In 1880 the Firestones' orchard produced 200 bushels of fruit. Those not marketed were consumed by the family as apple butter, cider, and vinegar; others were stored in barrels in the cellar for later use or preserved by canning or drying.

The forest provides timber for lumber and firewood. Using a two-man crosscut saw and wedges, a tall tree is cut into logs. The Firestone Farm contained an 18-acre woodlot in 1880.



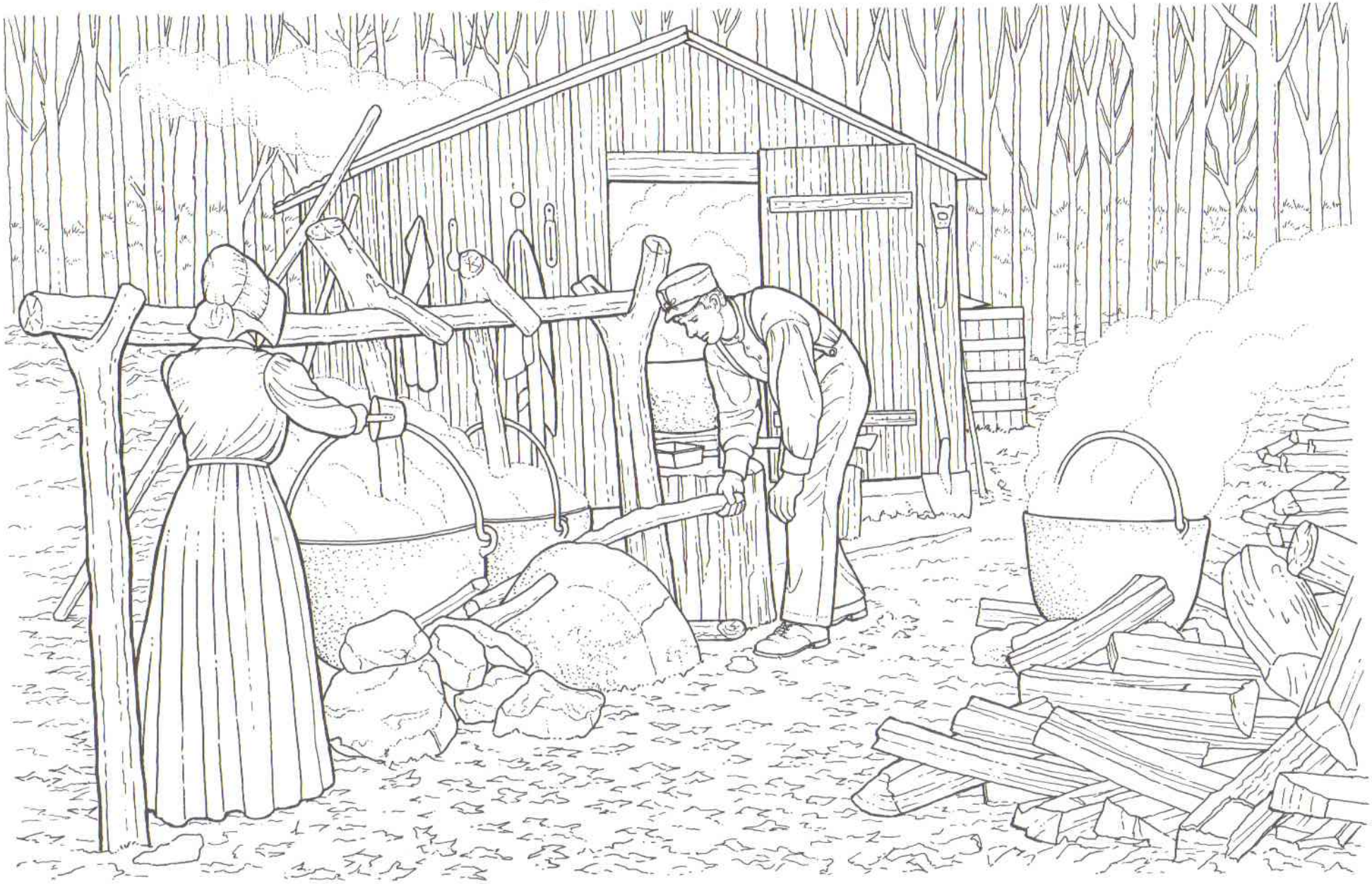
Frozen roads make it possible to haul a heavy load of logs on horse-drawn sledges. Trees harvested from the farmer's woodlot and hauled to a saw mill meant additional income for him.



Keeping up a good supply of firewood was a year-round task for farmers and their sons. Wood cut from Firestone Farm's woodlot was split into ten cords of firewood in 1880.

After a long morning working in the fields it feels good to wash up at the pump before going into the farmhouse for a big noon meal. The well, located next to the farmhouse, was the sole source of water for drinking, cooking, and washing.

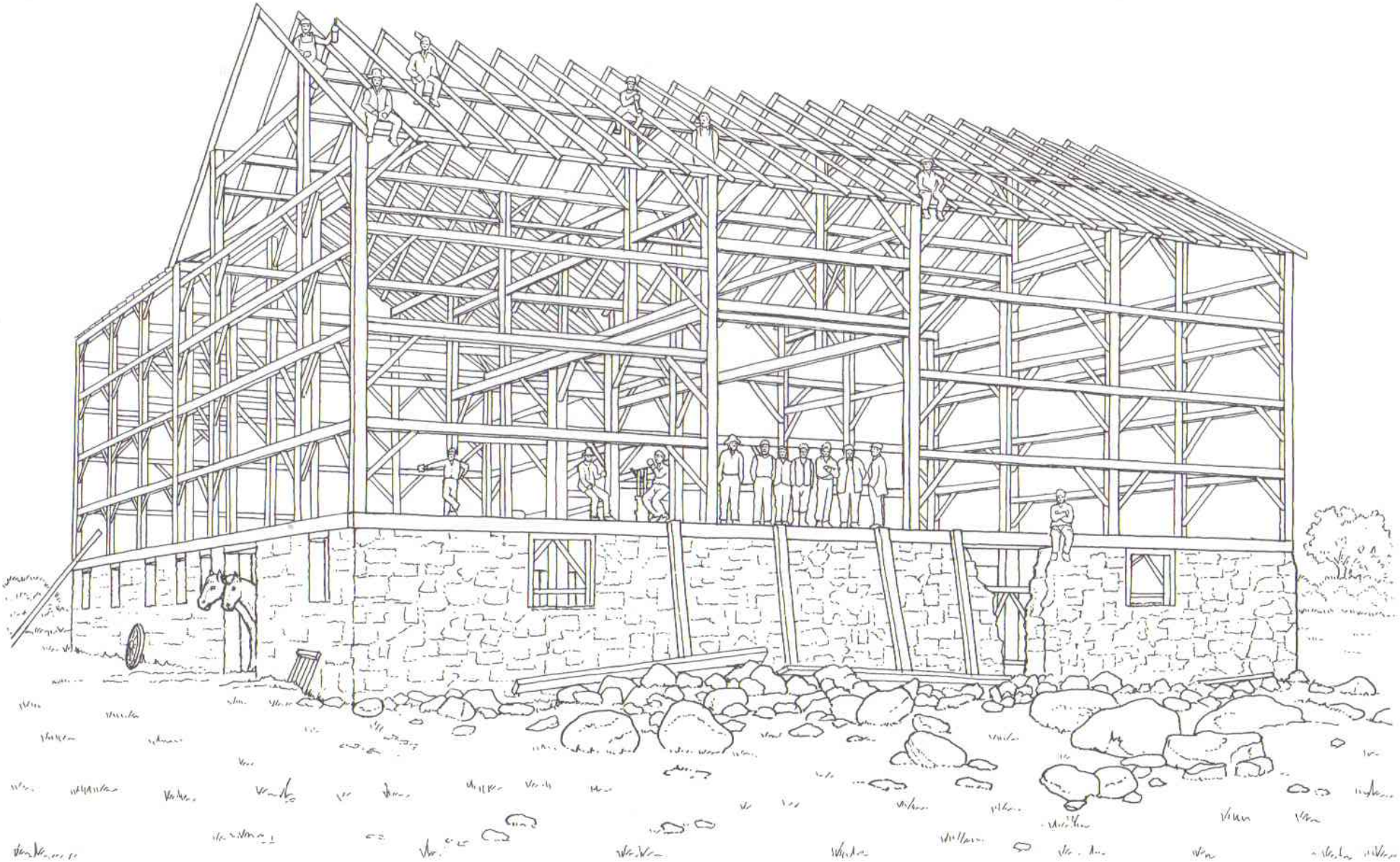
Sugar maple trees in the farm's woodlot are tapped for their sap in the late winter. A combination of warming days and cold nights makes the sap run best. The gathered sap is hauled by sledge to the sugar house.



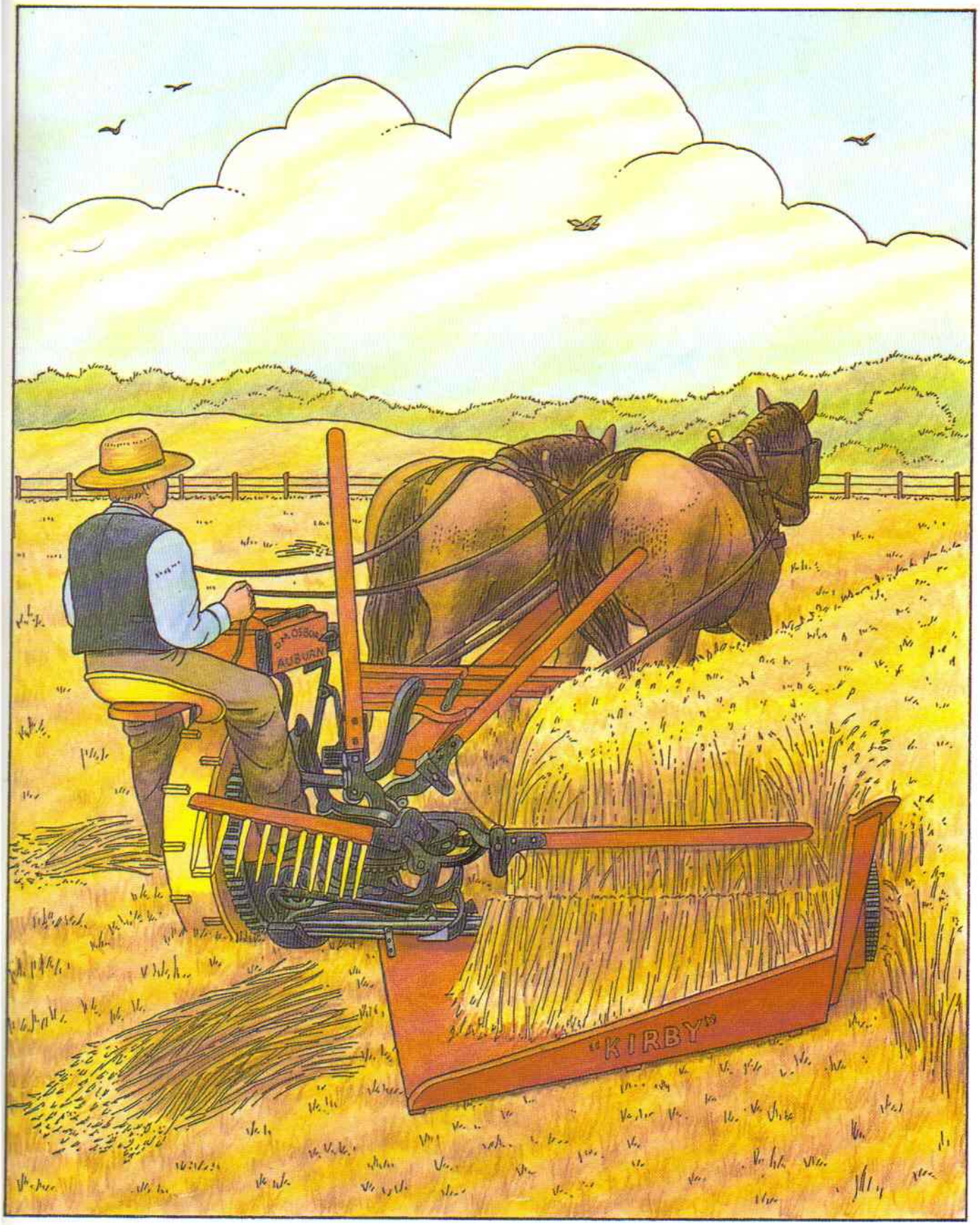
At the sugar house the sap is slowly boiled down. The water in the sap is boiled off, leaving behind the deliciously sweet concentrate known as maple syrup.

Winter is a time to care for the equipment used on the farm. The scythe, used for mowing grass, is sharpened on a hand-cranked grindstone.

Winter provides a time for necessary chores such as jacking up the hay wagon in order to repair its wheels. Farmers had to be "jacks-of-all-trades," but, when a job required more specialized expertise, skilled craftsmen such as blacksmiths and wheelwrights could be found in town.



A barn raising is an event in which everyone in the community helps. Called "frolics" in the nineteenth century, barn raisings were expressions of community solidarity marked by shared hard work, plentiful amounts of food and drink, and a barn dance at day's end.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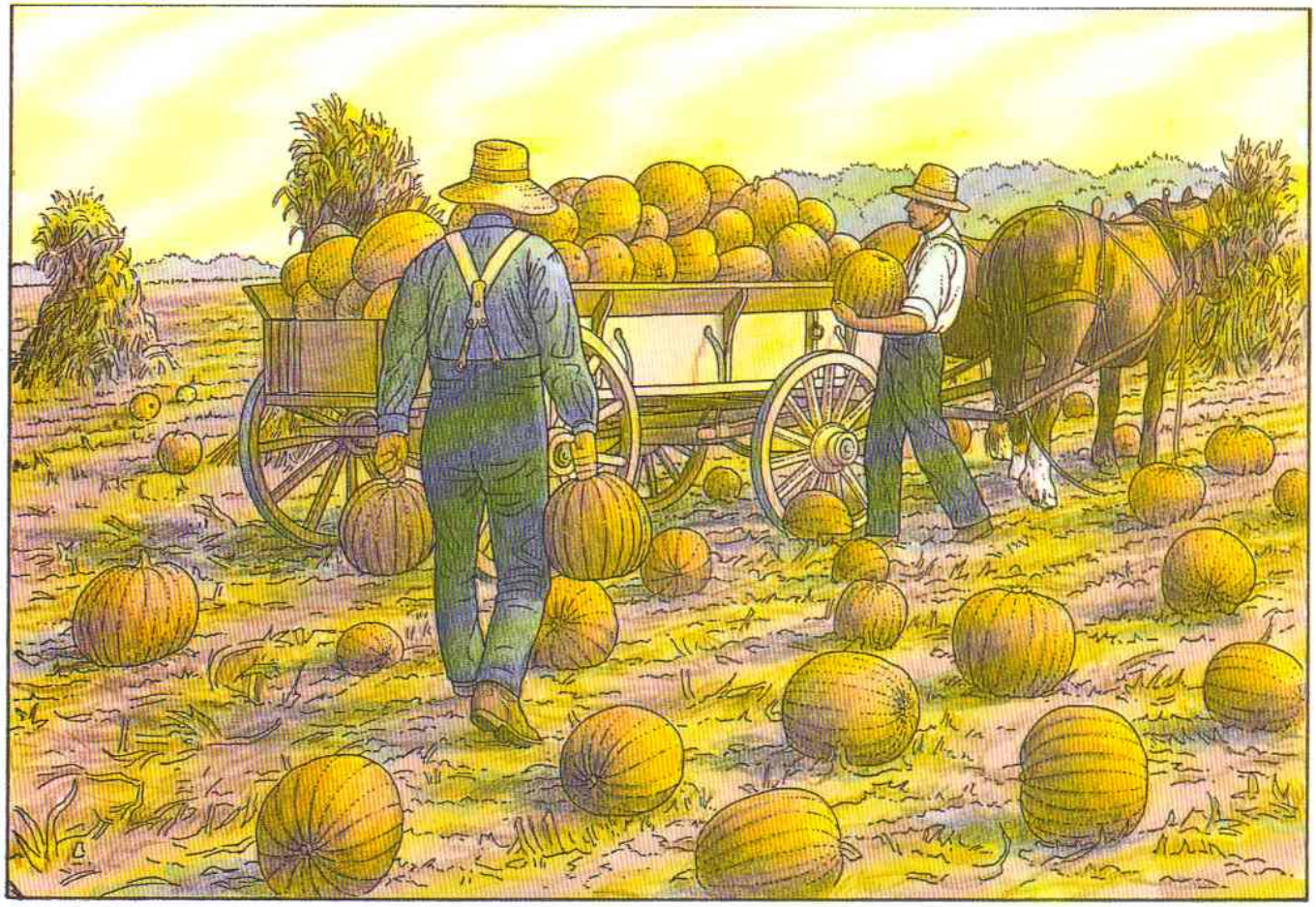

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Life on a farm before the advent of tractors relied on horse-drawn equipment and the skills and labor of many people, as the detailed drawings in this fascinating book reveal. Accurately rendered by A. G. Smith, 43 ready-to-be-colored illustrations depict a wide variety of farm activities in mid-19th-century America.

Based on scenes recreated on the Firestone Farm at historic Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, the drawings include authentically detailed views of kitchen chores (churning butter, preparing foods); seasonal occupations (shearing sheep, mowing hay, gathering pumpkins, "harvesting" and "sugaring off" maple syrup), as well as plowing, planting, caring for livestock, splitting firewood, raising a barn and many other activities.

Peter H. Cousins, Curator of Agriculture at Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, has written an informative introduction and provided fact-filled captions for this entertaining and educational view of life in bygone rural America.

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